Influence of Delay on Electrophysiological Correlates of Memory during Early Childhood

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Introduction

• Early childhood represents a period of rapid memory development (e.g., Drummey & Newcombe, 2002; Riggins, 2014).
• For example, with age, children are able to retain information over increasingly long delays (e.g., Baker-Ward, Gordon, Ornstein, Larus, & Clubb, 1993).
• Event-related potential (ERP) studies have begun to address neural mechanisms underlying these changes at encoding (Rollins & Riggins, 2013) and retrieval (e.g., Marshall, Drummey, Fox, & Newcombe, 2002; Riggins & Rollins, 2015; Riggins, Rollins, & Graham, 2013) during early childhood.
• However, we still know little about how factors that may influence memory (e.g., delay duration, encoding manipulations, stimulus type) affect the neural response.
• The goal of the present analyses was to examine the effect of delay on ERPs at retrieval.

Methods

Participants

• Children from three memory studies participated in similar tasks. Retrieval was assessed following a delay of:
  - 30 minutes (n = 22, M = 5.08 ± 0.61 years, 7 males)
  - 1 day (n = 32, M = 4.74 ± 0.54 years, 20 males)
  - 2 days (n = 19, M = 4.75 ± 0.52 years, 9 males)
  - 1 week (n = 40, M = 5.56 ± 0.28 years, 16 males)

Memory Paradigm

Session 1: Encoding

• Children interacted in a laboratory setting with a researcher
• EEG was recorded with a sampling rate of 512 Hz (Biosemi Active 2) from 64 active Ag-AgCl scalp electrodes and two vertical and two horizontal electrooculogram (EOG) channels.
• EEG data were re-referenced offline to an average reference configuration using Brain Electrical Source Analysis (BESA) software (MEGIS Software GmbH, Gräfelfing, Germany).
• Ocular artifacts were corrected applying the Ille, Berg, & Scherg (2002) algorithm.
• Trials were hand-edited to remove movement-related artifacts.
• Data were high and low pass filtered at 0.1 Hz and 40 Hz, respectively.
• A minimum of 10 trials were required per condition.
• Trials were epoched with a 100 ms baseline and continued during stimulus presentation for 1500 ms at two epochs: 350-500 ms and 800-1100 ms.

Session 2: Retrieval

• ERPs recorded during passive viewing
• Behavioral memory assessment followed judgments made regarding previously viewed items and novel distracters
• Old/new

Event-Related Potentials (ERPs)

• Delay significantly influenced children’s ability to discriminate between old and new items, F(3, 109) = 11.37, p < .001.
• Delay had a larger impact on accurate recognition of previously encountered items, F(3, 109) = 5.21, p = .002, than correct rejection of novel items, F(3, 109) = 1.63, p = .19.

Results

Behavioral Performance (Figure 1)

• Delay significantly influenced children’s ability to discriminate between old and new items, F(3, 109) = 11.37, p < .001.
• Delay had a larger impact on accurate recognition of previously encountered items, F(3, 109) = 5.21, p = .002, than correct rejection of novel items, F(3, 109) = 1.63, p = .19.

ERP Data (Figure 2)

4 Delay x 2 Condition (hits, correct rejection) x 7 Sagittal Plane x 5 Coronal Plane analysis. Support for this research was provided by NICHD (R03HD067425).

Discussion

• Memory performance decreased across longer delays
• ERP responses to old and new items are similar across delays ranging from 30 minutes to one week, suggesting similar neural processes engaged overtime
• Overall amplitudes tended to be smaller at shorter delays
• Future research is needed to investigate other factors that may influence neural and behavioral correlates of memory such as incidental vs. intentional encoding, depth of encoding, and stimulus type (e.g., 2-D images vs. photographs of objects)

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References